

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 4
Bundesliga
Leverkusen v Dortmund
Live from 8:30pm
Hannover v Augsburg
Live from 10:30pm

TEN CRICKET
Second T20
South Africa v England
Live from 6:30pm

SONY ESPN
La Liga
Vallecano v Sevilla
Live from 5:00pm
Malaga v Real Madrid
Live from 9:00pm
Bilbao v Sociedad

Live from 11:30pm
Atl. Madrid v Villarreal
Live from 1:30am (Monday)

SONY SIX
FA Cup
Blackburn v West Ham

Live from 8:00pm
Chelsea v Man City
Live from 10:00pm
Serie A
Roma v Palermo
Live from 1:45am (Monday)

DAY'S EVENT
Asia Cup Qualifiers
Time: 7:30pm
Venue: Fatullah
Hong Kong v UAE



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) welcomes Shakib Al Hasan, who recently returned from the UAE after playing in the Pakistan Super League, back into the national training camp at the gym of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

All the same for Mustafizur

SPORTS REPORTER



Four years ago Bangladesh were on the brink of history. They had against all odds reached the final of the Asia Cup in 2012 and were considered favourites to win their first ever major international cricket tournament.

However, a thrilling 100 overs later, the Tigers fell agonisingly short of their desired target. Pakistan had scored 236 in the final, while the hosts were restricted to 234 for 8. The intensity of that topsy-turvy encounter was as such that it left many of Bangladesh's senior players teary-eyed.

Back then, Mustafizur Rahman was just one of the many pacers training under the BCB's pace development camp. After sweating it out in the morning, he had returned to his uncle's house in Mirpur to watch the final. Like the players on the field, he too was

disappointed with the way the last over had panned out for the hosts.

Four years on, the bony 20-year-old is considered as Bangladesh's main weapon in the bowling department.

He has surprised Pakistan, dominated India and will definitely keep Sri Lanka's tacticians on their toes.

Mustafizur has easily been Bangladesh's best bowler in the T20 format since 2015. With ten wickets in seven matches, he is their highest wicket-taker and also boasts the lowest economy-rate, 5.45, in the side.

T20 cricket is a format that the Tigers are yet to feel comfortable in and if they want to go anywhere near their 2012 achievement, then they will need Mustafizur to be in his fiery best.

The above factors can put a tinge of pressure on any youngster in the world. Surrounded by a dozen journalists, right before the start of Bangladesh's first day of training in Mirpur yesterday, Mustafizur, however, seemed as confident and jolly as he was at the start of his career.

"It's good that I have a good record against India and that we are playing the first game against them. If I get a chance, I will try to do my best. I don't really have any plan in mind for that game. All I want to do is play the way that I always play," said Mustafizur.

Following the Zimbabwe series, which was drawn 2-2 in Khulna, Bangladesh had training camps in Khulna and Chittagong. These camps according to Mustafizur, have immensely helped improve the morale of the team.

"I think those two camps helped us a lot. On the whole, the mood has been very good and we are expecting good things to happen in the Asia Cup," he said.

"One of the aspects that the lower order batsmen worked on in training is batting. And I think that will help the team because we all have to try to provide our best. If the team requires us to score runs, we have to do that. The training camp has given me a lot more confidence," he added.

Siddikur drops to 59th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman was languishing at 59th position after a one-over-par (72) in the third round of the Maybank Championship in Malaysia yesterday. The 31-year-old golfer exchanged two birdies for three bogeys in the penultimate round at the Royal Selangor Golf Club in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, after having racked up 69 and 72 in the first two days. Korea's Soomin Lee stormed to a three-stroke lead after a sparkling seven-under-par (64) in the third round while overnight leader, Nathan Holman of Australia, dropped to second position in the three-million-dollar event.

De Rossi out for a month

AFP, Rome

Veteran Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi will miss his side's Champions League last 16, second leg against Real Madrid in three weeks due to a calf injury, the Serie A side said Friday.

The 32-year-old Italy international was injured during the dying stages of Roma's 2-0 home leg defeat to Real on Wednesday and the club said he will need a month to recover.

He is likely to miss four or five Serie A games as well, with Roma currently fourth, just two points off the Champions League qualifying positions.

Barca move 9 clear

AFP, Madrid



LFP

Barcelona moved nine points clear at the top of La Liga thanks to first-half goals from Luis Suarez and Neymar despite an unconvincing display in a 2-1 win at Las Palmas on Saturday. Suarez opened the scoring early on with his 41st goal of the season, but Willian Jose deservedly levelled for the hosts inside 10 minutes.

Neymar restored the lead from close range before the break, but the European champions had to withstand a late onslaught from the Canary Islanders to stretch their unbeaten run in all competitions to 32 games.

Barca's closest challengers Atletico Madrid can cut the gap when they host fourth-placed Villarreal, whilst Real Madrid, who are now 10 points adrift of Barca, travel to Malaga on Sunday.

Despite facing Arsenal in the Champions League on Tuesday, Barcelona boss Luis Enrique rested only Gerard Pique, whilst Sergio Busquets was also suspended from the side that is expected to start at the Emirates.

The star trio of Lionel Messi, Suarez and Neymar started once more and bore fruit

after just six minutes as Suarez extended his lead over Cristiano Ronaldo as La Liga's top scorer with his 25th Liga goal of the campaign.

Andres Iniesta's perfectly weighted pass freed Jordi Alba down the left and his low cross was fired into the roof of the net by Suarez at the back post.

However, just as in their win at Sporting Gijon in midweek, Barca conceded minutes after scoring the opener as Jonthan Viera's brilliant backheel teed up Jose to drive home the equaliser.

Unlike the majority of Barca's opponents, Las Palmas were determined to take the game to the visitors, but in doing so left themselves exposed at the back against the most feared attacking trio in the world.

Javi Varas made fine saves to deny Messi and Andres Iniesta in quick succession before Suarez somehow headed wide when completely unmarked from Messi's free-kick.

However, the former Liverpool striker redeemed himself with brilliant play down the right in the build-up to Barca's second as from his cutback Varas again denied Messi, but the ball fell perfectly for Neymar to slam home the rebound.

Suarez had a golden chance to put the game to bed after the break as Varas made another remarkable save from point-blank range after a great knockdown by Dani Alves.

Bologna snap Juve run

AFP, Rome

Bologna held on for a scoreless draw to end champions Juventus's 15-match winning streak in Serie A on Friday.

The Old Lady of Turin had not failed to win in the league since a 1-0 reverse at Sassuolo at the end of October and turned an 11-point gap to the top of the table into a one-point advantage over Napoli with a 1-0 success against their nearest rivals last weekend.

However, Juve travelled to a Bologna side who were themselves in the midst of a resurgence since former Italy coach Roberto Donadoni took over the reins in October after Delio Rossi was sacked.

Bologna were 18th then and have since risen to ninth.

Already a week ago, Juve showed signs of tiredness despite beating Napoli and their efforts seemed to catch up with them in Bologna.

Gunners fire blanks

AFP, London



The FA Cup

FA Cup

FA Cup holders Arsenal were left frustrated in their efforts to warm up for Tuesday's Champions League meeting with Barcelona with a win as their fifth round meeting with Hull City ended goalless at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday.

An outstanding display by Hull goalkeeper Eldin Jakupovic meant Steve Bruce's under-strength side retain hope of avenging their 2014 FA Cup final defeat by Arsenal and so preventing Arsene Wenger's side becoming the first team to win the competition three years in succession since the 1880s. The draw also ensured the strength of Wenger's belief that replays are an integral part of the FA Cup will be tested just days after he spoke out in support of such matches.

Veteran French manager Wenger, in charge of Arsenal since 1996, made his remarks this week following reports the Football Association (FA) were considering ditching replays in the competition to ease the fixture schedule, a proposal that drew support from Hull boss Bruce.

In truth, neither manager wanted the burden of an extra game at this stage of the season, with Arsenal pushing for the Premier League title and Hull top of England's second-tier Championship.

But the Gunners, who also beat Hull in the third round of last season's FA Cup, paid the price for their failure to turn territorial dominance into goals.

FedEx Golf underway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The 16th FedEx Bangladesh Cup Golf Tournaments got underway at the Savar Golf Club (SGC) yesterday. A total of 240 golfers from home and abroad are participating in the two-day tournament.

Major general Waker-uz-Zaman inaugurated the tournament where Tanvir Mothar, managing director of Bangladesh Express Company Ltd, was also present.

Mueller rescues Bayern

AFP, Berlin

Thomas Mueller netted twice on Saturday as Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich came from behind to beat Darmstadt 3-1 in their last match before their Champions League clash at Juventus.

With second-placed Borussia Dortmund playing on Sunday, Bayern took their chance to go 11 points clear in Germany's top flight but Mueller had to dig them out of trouble at the Allianz Arena before Robert Lewandowski added their third goal.

"Today's match had nothing to do with Juventus, we're just happy to have won and take three more points. It'll be 0-0 again in Turin," said Mueller when asked about Tuesday's last 16, first leg, European clash.

"Obviously, it's annoying that we conceded a goal from a header, but that doesn't necessarily mean we will do the same against Juventus."



The Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club players and officials pose for an official photo session at the club premises ahead of their departure for Singapore yesterday. The Bangladesh Premier League champions will play against Tampines Rovers in their first match of the AFC Cup in Singapore on Tuesday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

SYMPHONY

আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবসে সকল শহীদের প্রতি শ্রদ্ধা